

Support for Decision-Making in Evaluating Proposed Dredging Projects

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ABSTRACT:

NOAA recently completed an effort to assist the State of Delaware in developing guidance to evaluate proposed dredging projects. The Delaware Statewide Dredging Policy Framework manual covers all aspects of the decision-making process, including economic benefits, potential environmental impacts of the dredging, disposal options, and the potential for beneficial reuses and habitat restoration. The manual was developed in cooperation with Diamond State Port Corporation, Delaware Economic Development Office, Wilmington Tug and Launch, Inc., Summit North Marina, industry (for example, Motiva) as well as the Federal agencies (EPA, ACOE, NOAA), state agencies (DE and NJ), environmental groups, and citizens.

The guidance is intended to support evaluations of environmental impacts in support of dredging decisions, and provide suggestions for project designers on modifying projects to reduce environmental impacts. A tiered framework was created to determine how to identify potential effects before dredging (whether literature information is sufficient or whether site-specific sampling would be helpful). Guidance and recommendations for evaluating impacts during dredging operations, and monitoring post-dredging are also provided. The document also provides references to other sources of information useful in the decision making process and checklists to identify habitat and resources that might be affected.

This effort will improve decision making in the State of Delaware and will reduce environmental impacts of dredging projects. It also serves as a useful model for other areas by providing a template for discussions with local stakeholders in port and coastal areas throughout the country.